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courage is contagious

Viewing cable 08SANSALVADOR1038, FRIENDS OF MAURICIO REPORT HARASSMENT, FEAR

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g.

#08SANSALVADOR1038.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08SANSALVADOR1038	2008-08-29 18:58	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy San Salvador

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.wikileaks.elfaro.net/es/201106/notas/4414/#>

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSN #1038/01 2421858
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 291858Z AUG 08
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0021
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 001038

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/26/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [ES](#)
SUBJECT: FRIENDS OF MAURICIO REPORT HARASSMENT, FEAR
VIOLENCE

Classified By: The Ambassador, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Representatives of the Friends of Mauricio group supporting (left-wing) FMLN presidential candidate Mauricio Funes alleged to Pol and Econ Counselors August 27 they were experiencing harassment and feared it would intensify as the March election approaches. They claimed

they could not rule out the possibility of violence against themselves or even the FMLN candidate. They expressed hope that because both the FMLN and (center-right, pro-U.S.) ARENA were orienting their campaign message to the political center, the real winner of 2009 elections would be El Salvador, regardless of which candidate is victorious. Embassy is in listening mode, not yet having seen any confirmed incident of election-related violence. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Funes Economic Advisor Alex Segovia requested a meeting with Pol and Econ Counselors August 27 to meet with leadership of the Friends of Mauricio movement. Segovia was accompanied by Gerardo Caceres, Director of Puntual, S.A., a debt collection agency that is working with Ex-Im Bank; Miguel Menendez, owner of a variety of businesses including coffee farms, car parts importation, and a private security firm; and, Col. (retired) David Munguia Payes, retired Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF) Colonel believed to be in line as Defense Minister in a Funes government.

¶3. (C) The group argued that they had expected elements of ARENA to be concerned by Funes' strong support and for the campaign to be dirty, but were concerned by the increasing threats they suffered. They claimed their phones are tapped. They also alleged they and their families are being followed by groups of armed men they believe to be associated with Salvadoran police forces. When they call 911 for assistance, they say police officers answer the phone but take no action. They report that several of their businesses have been subjected to serial inspections by a number of GOES agencies, including Social Security, the Health Ministry, Labor Ministry, and tax authorities. They expressed fears that these groups might step up their pressure and even make an attempt on Funes' life. The group said they planned to make these allegations public but wanted to alert us because of the U.S. close ties with El Salvador and our interest in free and fair elections. Segovia said the group was also considering airing their concerns with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

¶4. (C) The three added that they had received what they believed to be credible information from a variety of sources that groups inside ARENA) they were careful not to accuse the entire party) were reactivating the death squads that existed during the Salvadoran Civil War.

¶5. (C) All three men described their motivation for supporting Funes. Munguia Payes said that in the ESAF he had fought against the FMLN for twelve years. Payes said he viewed a potential Funes government as a "democratic transition," beginning the alternation of power that was inevitable in a democracy. Menendez had suffered at the hands of the FMLN during the war, including the destruction of two entire coffee harvests. He said all Salvadorans had paid the costs of the armed conflict, but the time had come to look forward, not back. Caceres said a Funes win with strong support from elements outside the FMLN would empower Funes to govern without being beholden to hard-line forces in the party. At the same time, if Funes loses with strong support outside the party, he would become the de facto leader of El Salvador's opposition. A Funes loss with only the support of FMLN hard-liners, though, would perpetuate the polarization that has characterized El Salvador since the 1992 peace accords. In that case, the next FMLN candidate would be a hard-liner, representing a step backwards for the party and democracy, according to Caceres.

¶6. (C) Munguia Payes gave us a copy of a letter apparently signed by ARENA candidate Rodrigo Avila addressed to current and retired members of the ESAF. He said the letter falsely accuses the FMLN of hating the ESAF and planning to abolish it, and of showing disrespect to the survivors of those ESAF members killed during the Salvadoran Civil War. Munguia Payes said these allegations are false and that ARENA and Avila know they are false. He commented that they are an attempt to undermine one of El Salvador's most respected post-war democratic institutions with the ultimate aim of having the ESAF prevent the FMLN from taking power if Funes

wins the election. He added that the ESAF is becoming increasingly disenchanted with the ruling government because of its failure to provide adequate uniforms, boots, gasoline and other supplies.

17. (C) Despite these concerns, Munguia Payes expressed hope that the current campaign would not be excessively polarized. He noted that Funes was seeking votes from the political center in the same way Avila was orienting ARENA more towards the center. If these trends can survive the campaign, he said, the real winner will be El Salvador.

18. (C) Election-related violence or harassment is a serious allegation, and we would want to respond to it if and when we are presented confirmed evidence that it is really taking place. For now we are in listening mode, and recognize that the very polarization described by this group of visitors makes it hard to distill facts from charges and counter-charges. Regardless of our views regarding Avila's or Funes' proposals and their effects on U.S. interests, we and other senior USG officials have expressed to all Salvadoran audiences the high value that we place on free, fair, and peaceful elections. We will continue to do that.
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